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MUSIC AND THE GRAND STYLE

By D. C. PARKER

IT was Matthew Arnold who searched carefully for a definition of what a well-known critic has called "that mysterious entity," the Grand Style. Arnold's definition, evidently framed with caution, is in itself quite enough to convince us of the difficulty of forming a statement of what constitutes the Grand Style; a statement that is at once accurate and comprehensive—close enough to the fact to be of service, and wide enough in its phrase to apply to the works which the literary man will agree should come under the heading. "The Grand Style," wrote Arnold, "arises in poetry when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or severity a serious subject." Homer, Dante, and Milton—these are the men to whom Arnold allowed the Grand Style. This is interesting, no doubt, but someone is sure to say, and there is justification for the remark, that we need definitions of definitions. Cannot we brush away misunderstanding by using the simplest terms? What, in any case, is style? "Style, the Latin name for a pen," says Professor Raleigh, "has come to designate the art that handles, with ever fresh vitality and wary alacrity, the fluid elements of speech." More briefly, it is elsewhere described as the characteristic or peculiar mode of expression and execution; and, again, as "the man himself," the revelation of personality. When we put pen to paper, we advertise ourselves. Our virtues and defects are there for all the world to read. As the Burtonian maxim has it, "our style bewrays us," and it may be remembered that Pater, in discussing Flaubert's concern for "the word's adjustment to its meaning," stipulates that "the first condition of this must be, of course, to know yourself, to have ascertained your own sense exactly."

Arnold's definition possesses a significance that is poetical only. Nevertheless, it supplies us with a starting point, inasmuch as we can make a slight variation upon it, and then see how the result applies to music. This manner of testing has obvious dangers. The original was framed to meet the poetical case. We make only the changes which the name of another art necessitates. May it not be that the statement, as it appears in its second form, proves unsuitable for our purpose; that we have to alter the method of testing? When applying the variation of Arnold's words to the sister muse, we must, consequently, keep in mind that we do so merely in order to come to a closer understanding of what music written in the Grand Style consists. Here, then, we have the Arnoldian dictum as it reads adapted for the present occasion. "The Grand Style arises in music when a noble nature, musically gifted, treats with simplicity or severity a serious subject." Does that satisfy you? Quite candidly, I confess that it does not satisfy me. "*Der Ring des Nibelungen*," I consider, possesses the Grand Style. Can we say that the theme is treated with simplicity or severity, relative as those terms necessarily are? Similarly, I consider that "*Die Meistersinger*" possesses in abundance the proper qualities. Can we call the subject serious? There yet remains the problem of the noble nature, a condition that would rule out any work by Lulli, even were the remaining conditions fulfilled. In music, I claim a greater latitude than this modification of Arnold's words permits, and, it seems to me, at least, that we have a tolerably accurate idea of the Grand Style as exhibited in that art if we say that it is in evidence when the music is big, not only, or even necessarily, in its externals, but in its essential factors and its emotional significance. Pater was right when he affirmed that "as a quality of style, soul is a fact." The matter, needless to say, is hedged round with great difficulties, however well-disposed and cunning we are in grappling with them. And the difficulties themselves are not lessened by being of a subjective nature. To my thinking, if the Grand Style does not imply the presence of the sublime, it certainly implies something very akin to it. When we are confronted with it, we feel that the work reaches the heights, like a spiritual Matterhorn, and carries us definitely to the rare and elevated places.

Touching this question, one is inclined to think that more satisfaction to ourselves can be derived from a contact with music than from theoretical disputations, however apt. For in our day-to-day experience we are brought face to face with compositions of all periods and styles, and it is, naturally, in the course of these

artistic excursions that we encounter the examples which we credit with the needful condition, and can say to ourselves, "that, at any rate, is in the Grand Style." It will be just those excursions that will set us thinking, and nurse a desire to settle the problem to our satisfaction. Who, then, are the composers we are willing to place in the exalted position that Arnold allowed to Homer, Dante, and Milton? Who are the world-singers, singers not thrown into the light of publicity because of a vogue or a passing fad, but who hold their courses like great ships upon the deep sea, whatever the state of the tides of fashion?

Most people, I am sure, will feel that Bach is one of the musicians who meet the demands we must make—Bach, who so often sang in a strong and joyful voice for the entire universe. You may say that Bach has his parochial aspect, which is true. Steep yourself in the story of his life, turn over the pages of the historian, and you will find that you have been made to see the Lutheran Germany of his day. This is not to deny the greater aspect of Bach. Few students of Shakespeare are without intimate knowledge of the "spacious days" of Queen Elizabeth. To learn that Shakespeare walked the streets of London, had his plays produced at the Globe Theatre, and frequented the Mermaid Tavern is not to blot out the world-figure. In his greater moments, and they are many, Bach is a cosmic singer, taking not a corner or a province for his own, but the whole, wide world. If the sense of "o'er-topping" be a criterion, then Bach cannot justly be denied his place; if there be a time for employing the oft-abused adjective "consummate," it is, surely, when speaking of such a thing as the Sanctus from the Mass in B minor. This sense of the "bigness" of the man is strengthened when we think of many of his contemporaries, who have become mere names. If Bach had not been more than a weaver of parts, and a dexterous juggler using counter-point instead of hats and rabbits, he would have been placed in the museum beside the mummies of the Pharaohs long ago. Bach himself is a world in which the modern musician, for all the later accomplishment, can wander to his advantage, breathing in the air of purity and sanity, quenching his thirst at innumerable springs. For here there is greatness not only in "filling the mould," but in maintaining the dignity of thought and holding the interest by the sheer weight and authority of his genius. The reader will not look for a closer enquiry into the case of Bach; because, in the first place, Bach has his position secure by a consent that is all but universal; and because, in the second, it is known to all serious musicians that Bach's music is strong, deep, and vigorous, flowing

steady and true like a great river, and not a thing of erratic bubbles and splashes, however beautiful.

In Beethoven, likewise, the Grand Style is present. Despite the verdict of hasty youth, for whom the oft-repeated sonatas have grown stale, there is something here that voices the emotions of humanity in a language worthy of that noble task; something, in a word, of that "bigness" to which reference has already been made. The "Eroica," the C minor, and the Choral, these symphonies do not seem to us denominational. Than the Choral it would be difficult to mention a work more universal in its scope, appeal, and intention. In its higher manifestations, at least, the music of Beethoven, like the work of some other great men, while deeply personal, soars out of time and place. Certain it is that we have in him a noble nature, musically gifted, treating with simplicity—how much Beethoven could make out of a scale, or a few repeated notes!—a serious subject. More might be said of Beethoven than this, however; something of his spaciousness, something of his music's "alliance to great ends," for example. But there is no need to do more than make the briefest allusion to those compositions that are his authentic passports to the select circle. There can be little hesitation concerning the man when we name some of the products of his genius. The "Egmont," "Coriolan" and "Leonora No. 3" overtures are rendered difficult of appraisal by reason of their frequent programme appearances. Yet, strenuously wrought as they are to-day, we acknowledge them to be sealed with the seal of a great man, and stamped with the stamp of his personality. Some will wish to add the "Pathétique," or "Waldstein," or "Appassionata," or "Hammerclavier" sonata, perhaps all of them, according to their disposition. Truly, no works could be further removed from the tinkling tunes heard at one time so often in Viennese salons; their natural element is the world with its vast horizon. One is struck, not by their restrictions, but by their scope, their search for, and finding of, opportunities that allow, and sanction, the deeper utterance. It was but natural that in his early works the style and manner of the Eighteenth Century should weigh with Beethoven. The shadows of Haydn and Mozart lay across his path. Even a genius has to make a beginning somewhere. No such fact can banish Beethoven from the inner group. Either the "Eroica" is an epic page, or it is nothing, and the world stands on its head. True, the apprentice is aware that no man would now score an heroic symphony as Beethoven scored his. We must not be misled by contemplating the subsequent advance in orchestration. Let us put our finger upon

that which counts. Is there any man who exhibited in greater degree the faculty of raising a scale, a phrase, or a figure, unimportant and unimpressive if placed on neutral ground, to the full heights of significance; is there any who could from the simplest ingredients produce a more extraordinary richness? It is, perhaps, in this that Beethoven, as a master of the Grand Style, appears most clearly. Analyse some of his marvellous passages, and you will say that a thing, not dissimilar, has been written by another man in another place. Still, paradoxical as it may appear, the other man's effect is not like Beethoven's. It is not that Beethoven possessed a copyright in the realm of emotional expression, save that conferred upon him by his genius. The diatonic theme, the voice of the oboe, the stroke on the timpani were at the service of all. The difference between Beethoven and that other less fortunate personage must be accounted for by the relationship which the former establishes, by the grip he has over his theme, by the inherent strength that gives him power to battle with the circumstance.

It is Pater, I think, who makes a subtle distinction between good and great art. To ask more of a work of art than that it should be in harmony with itself is to ask too much. One may be permitted to say, however, that the recognition of this is not incompatible with the recognition of a distinction between the good and the great, the greatness, in music, depending upon the presence of something that adds to, rises out of, or transcends the harmonious condition just mentioned. The good acknowledges and abides by its own law; it preserves consistency within itself. The great does all this and, in addition, communicates to us something that at once impresses us. We are conscious that an added richness and power *are* present, that they have a bearing upon the quality, effect, and status of the work. We may feel what we cannot describe or define. It is genius working with its pen, and the word "magic" may be pardoned those who call upon it when they have discovered a peak in Darien, or when a new planet swims into their ken. It is personality revealed upon the page; or, to express it otherwise, it is style—"the man himself." In a supreme degree, Beethoven has the gift of thus impressing us. Again and again, we observe how he works, abiding his time, and bringing forth the full flower of his thought in its due season. All the emotions are sounded on his lyre. He bends to some confidential confession; he sings a hymn of humanity. From chaos and darkness, he brings order and light. In him we discern that "agitated soul" which the Aristotelian

view postulates as an essential to the attainment of the grand or superior.

I said that I claimed a greater latitude in music than Arnold countenanced in poetry. Despite this, I do not find many men to whom I can credit the Grand Style. This is a personal matter, and I may be wrong. To me it seems that, after Beethoven, Wagner is preëminently the man who claims attention. Coming to Wagner we come to one about whom there is no shadow of doubt whatever. If Wagner be not a master of the Grand Style, no one is. If Wagner did not take the universe in his arms, no other musician assumed that burden. Outwardly the music-dramas of Wagner are grand in that they are spread upon an enormous canvas, and that with a stroke of the brush the composer could cause many others to look very small. For it is in the presence of the giant that the dwarf seems most dwarfish. Not alone in sheer length and architectural splendour does Wagner substantiate his claim to the title of master in this regard. The style of his music reinforces that claim, and reinforces it beyond cavil. No man can hear "Der Ring des Nibelungen," "Tristan und Isolde," and "Die Meistersinger" without feeling that he is in touch with one on whom the Grand Style sat unconstrainedly and naturally. Rhetorical Wagner most certainly was; splendidly and opulently rhetorical. In the face of this rhetoric the person who rejects rhetoric as such gives himself some trouble to justify his attitude. The mature Wagner marched on the heights, and if we want to realise how fully and gloriously he employed the Grand Style we have but to compare his work with that surrounding it. Put the love-music of "Tristan und Isolde" against the love-music of the average opera, put the purple patches, (if the phrase be allowed), against the purple patches of others, and you see at once the striking difference. There is nothing small or mean, nothing insignificant or compromising, in the "Liebestod" or "Wotan's Abschied," while practically the whole of "Götterdämmerung" touches the peaks of epic grandeur. This ability to grasp the large thing and express it in appropriate accents did not banish the ability to come to close quarters, to sound a tender note, to breathe a quiet charm, or attain the intimate. With Wagner, the creator of Eva as well as of Brünnhilde, the greater included the less, which it does not always do in art. The episode of the Rhine-maidens in Act III of "Götterdämmerung," and the first act of "Die Walküre," are proof conclusive. Like Shakespeare, Wagner could descend from his pedestal; and, as in the case of Shakespeare, there was nothing shameful in the movement. It is a truth that

Wagner held his style easily. He showed an extraordinary freedom, dropping the larger and more imposing to take up the smaller and more delicate, without surrendering one jot or tittle in the matter of quality. Few things are more remarkable than the manner in which Wagner revealed his mastery in this connection. It has been pointed out how his four great works differ in instrumentation; how, again, "*Die Meistersinger*" is primarily contrapuntal, "*Parsifal*" primarily harmonic; how "*Tristan und Isolde*" is chromatic, while "*Siegfried*" wears a colour that is almost Mozartian. There is some truth in this. Wagner worked from within, throwing his enormous power of concentration upon the essentials, But, contrapuntal or not, he is always Wagner. As an example of the reliability of his instinct, one may refer to the first act of "*Die Walküre*." For the greater part he determinedly holds to a comparative simplicity in the orchestra. The scene between Siegmund and Sieglinde could not further be reduced. One may even say this is applicable up to the point where Sieglinde sings, "*Sieg-mund, so nenn' ich dich*." The mention of that name, the drawing of the sword from the tree, the mutual recognition of Siegmund and Sieglinde—these events do not find Wagner lacking. He takes the orchestra and whips it up, infusing into it a new activity and vitality, imparting to it a tightness and an expressiveness not before touched in this act. One need not approach the subtleties in order to perceive that the effect got when the curtain falls has been obtained by the way in which the music rises upon itself, so to speak, and attains a higher altitude.

Wagner is leisurely, of that there can be no doubt, and this leisureliness, which would be insufferable in a small man, finds wide acceptance, as, to put it plainly, the stuff is so good. It must be emphasised that haste and fussiness are the arch-enemies of sublimity. But in Wagner's case we find more to say of his leisureliness than that. A music-drama which takes four hours for its performance is not of itself any proof of precocity. It may, indeed, proclaim the industry of the composer; it is as likely to advertise his defects. What ought to be our task here is to demonstrate that while Wagner lets his drama play itself out before us with a kind of sovereign majesty, he does not fill the hour by sacrificing the moment. A four-hour drama could be compounded of ingredients which bear no, or little, relationship one to another; of patches which are joined by the most obvious threads. It would be a bad drama. The length of Wagner's works must always be viewed in the light of their content. The length of any musical production is fixed by the amount of interest it holds, not by the

number of moments it occupies for its performance. Wagner sets his pace; he allows himself plenty of room for his metamorphosis of themes; he believes in a policy of saturation. It is a question whether his way of developing his themes could be satisfactorily carried on within narrower limits; it is a question whether a music-drama of the dimensions of, say, "Tristan und Isolde" could be shouldered by one who viewed music perpendicularly. Wagner is rich in dynamic power. His music progresses, reaching out with strong arms. Even his most atmospheric pages are not static, as that word is now understood. His method, as a method, makes enormous demands upon a composer, demands which only a Wagner can ever hope fully to satisfy. After hours of music which must be counted among the most glorious in existence, he achieves the "Liebestod," a priceless jewel. The leisureliness of Wagner did not result in looseness or diffuseness. I can think of few men who, having penned as many notes, so seldom disappoint us. Such things ought to be borne in mind, though not to the exclusion of the one central fact that must be sent home; namely, that Wagner's title to master of the Grand Style resides in the nature of his music. His "bigness" is not the bigness of one who uses six trumpets in place of two, who says *fortissimo* what another says *forte*, who imposes himself upon us by empty gestures and high-sounding adjectives. It is the "bigness" of one whose artistic stature is equal to the bigness of his theme; of one who, at a given moment, meets the exigencies of the situation completely, generously, and easily; of one who, alike in his thought and his manner of communicating it, towers towards the stars, and takes all things within his embrace. In a word, his music is big by virtue of its "alliance to great ends."

Liszt is difficult to deal with, not alone on account of the disparity in value of his compositions—here the virtuoso has the upper hand, here the pioneer—but on account of the fact that the aim is not always achieved. Some of Liszt's music is grandiose rather than grand, however high the theme, while the projected scheme is often more ambitious than is the power to carry it off adequate. Liszt is not a world-singer in the same sense as Bach, Beethoven, or Wagner, yet we cannot point to any man with a wider view, or to any whom we can less reasonably charge with intellectual parochialism. The "Dante" and "Faust" symphonies are, certainly, on a pedestal, and Liszt's better works, which we must sift from his lesser ones, have not yet had anything like justice done to them by the jury of the public. If, in acknowledging the extraordinary interest and peculiar nature of those two symphonies,

we are prone to make mental reservations, frankness will compel us to declare that what, in the end, separates Liszt from the writer of the authentic and indisputable Grand Style is, as it must inevitably be, the quality of the music, the stuff which he offered. Critical judgment and ingenuity are profitably employed in getting at the right and wrong of this delicate matter. Liszt has a decided claim to be rated very much higher than some pundits and oracles appear to consider. Part, and a great part, of this claim is based on historical ground, which cannot weigh with us very much, if at all, in the present enquiry. Liszt was the heroic exponent of romanticism, as Chopin was its intimate spokesman, Weber its pictorial artist, Berlioz its flame. Viewed in relation to the romantic movement, it is right to say that Liszt had the grand manner, which is not the same thing as the authentic Grand Style. So we are thrown back on the music itself, as it is, and as it sounds. If you feel that the thought, the emotion, the strength, warmth, and suitability of it are in true and full measure worthy of the theme, Liszt has some right to be included among the few who achieved the Grand Style. If, on the other hand, you are convinced that he is bombastic and flamboyant, that this music owes everything to externals, you must reject his candidature. There remains the middle course, the view that credits Liszt with occasional success in this matter, and with, perhaps, more than occasional failure. In Wagner we detected the presence of a kind of divine accommodation, a natural adjustment. He is not always upon the heights, and I, for one, do not think that continual residence at the summit is a necessary qualification. That is to say, a departure from the Grand Style does not of itself render a man ineligible for admission to the favoured circle. It is the *cause* of the departure which is the determining factor. So the thing needful to remember is that Wagner's descent to the slopes does not arise from a lack of strength, or from a failure to maintain himself where he ought to be. We have reached the *crux* of the problem if we ask whether the "dip" in Liszt, which is so noticeable, has the same origin as the "dip" in Wagner.

Was it in reality Liszt's purpose to let his music down thus; or did the lowering in interest, or in the intrinsic worth of his music, come from his loyalty to a theoretical method that insisted upon payment of its tribute; or did it arise simply from the fact that he was a composer less gifted than, say, Wagner? I am inclined to think that the last part of the query offers us the proper clue. Liszt's imagination and ambition marched ahead of his power to realise his vision, though that power was not in itself one

to be scoffed at. Together with this goes the truth that he often overreached himself, with the result that he achieved the very grand style, which, in spite of its description, is a lesser one than that which occupies our attention. Apart from this, there dwells that in his best work which, sooner or later, according to our alertness, will force us to enquire whether we should not make it clear that grandeur itself may be of more than one kind.

Perhaps the needs of the situation are met if we grant Liszt the Grand Style with specific reservations. First, it is not the Grand Style as we meet it in the composers previously named. Secondly, it alternates with a descent to a lower plane, not merely, or always, to adapt the music to the quieter moment or less pressing occasion. On the contrary, the reduction is due, I believe, simply to an inherent inability to sustain the music on the higher level. It would, of course, be folly to deny that Liszt has also provided examples of a departure from the Grand Style, which serve the same purpose and have the same æsthetic justification as those of Wagner. The difference between the two springs from the circumstance that, in many other cases, the practical result is hardly what he obviously meant it to be.

I want to be scrupulously fair, if only because I believe Liszt to be one of the composers most commonly undervalued. One cannot breathe his name without feeling very strongly that there are a hundred testimonies to his natural gifts which are not produced in the open court so freely as they should be. But the most ardent defender of Liszt's originality and aptitudes will not improve his case by shutting his eyes to the truth. That we are testing his music in the course of an examination into the Grand Style means that we are testing music that is heterogeneous, for Liszt was impressionable at all points and responsive to many influences. At his worst, Liszt can be boring and vulgar. But not infrequently he is more empty than either. I do not imagine that many people will have a great deal to say in favour of "Festklänge," with its barren fanfares. When for the moment his hand lost some of its cunning, Liszt took refuge in a picturesque integument. There are other moments and phases more inspiring, nevertheless. We cannot be blind to his preoccupation with the highest and noblest aspects of his themes. "Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne" draws us upward; in characteristic fashion, it contrasts the tranquillity of Nature, her law and order, her inward strength, with the conflicting voices of Humanity. Nature—Humanity; that is the spiritual basis of the work, and it is one which appealed forcibly to Liszt, who as a master of the antithesis

stands beside Victor Hugo. Something of this desire to endow his subject with its utmost significance, to show its applicability to all times and conditions, is present in "Tasso," which he designated as "*lamento e trionfo*." Upon our ears fall reminiscences of the sad beauty of the Venetian canals, the gentle waters of which conjure up visions of departed glories, and seem to hold some of the secrets of those golden, laughing hours when Frivolity went forth masked and powdered to the Carnival, and the song of the care-free floated over the lagoons. Later we are at the court of Ferrara, where the poet attached himself to Duke Alfonso, and argued with the well-lettered. But do we not feel that Liszt saw more in his subject than the tragedy of Tasso? It is the tragedy of the poet, whatever his period and place. Truly, this music sings the tragedy of Tasso, his own luckless destiny, and the increasing fame of his masterpiece. It sings also the neglect, misunderstanding, and ultimate victory of all true poets. The composition owes a great deal to the fact that Liszt saw the tragedy on the larger scale, and informed it with a deep, human feeling. Needless is it to add that Liszt gives us of his best when his imagination, kindled by the contemplation of his hero, or his theme, took wings at a time when his pen worked fluently.

When we leave Liszt, who is not outwith the debatable territory, we come to those who are most certainly within it. For the next composers to be taken in hand must be Strauss and Elgar. The difficulty we encounter in approaching the former is not unlike that to be found in the case just disposed of. It lies in the inequality of the total production. Considering the subjects chosen by him, the matter, manner, scope and compass of the music, Strauss has presented us with plenty of material on which to pronounce a judgment. It is the custom of hurried criticism to enlarge upon the demands Strauss makes in respect of players and instruments, and the natural inference of the unwary reader is that the uniqueness of the writer can be traced merely to the extravagance which he exhibits in this line. More remains to be said of, and for, Strauss than such criticism allows, and it is a thousand times more valuable. The test is once again the music itself. As he appears in "Don Juan," "Till Eulenspiegel," "Tod und Verklärung," "Don Quixote," "Heldenleben," and "Also sprach Zarathustra," Strauss is quite clearly of those who have the Grand Style. To make this plainer, one has but to record the outstanding characteristics of his writing. Normally his theme is not of the scrappy variety; in it there reside a thousand latent possibilities; he looks at music horizontally; he has, if any man living or dead has

it, the large curve which carries us on with a magnificent sweep; he can handle a weighty subject, that claims the maximum of concentration, nobly, and frequently sublimely; he can, likewise, hold the attention for some three quarters of an hour while he marches with his giant's steps, and all the time his music is tight and significant. He has a highly developed sense of form; indeed, the only right conception of it, for he realises that it bears a relationship to the content. There exist passages with which a general estimate of Strauss is bound to concern itself—the bleating of sheep in “Don Quixote,” the battle in “Heldenleben,” the fugue in “Also sprach Zarathustra,” and other things of a similar kind. These, particularly the first and second, reveal a lesser aspect, undoubtedly. In them he probably shows his Achilles heel. Yet the lesser aspect is the result neither of a small or tired brain, nor of an inability to bring out what was within him. Supposing we take the view that such pages are to be deplored, we can still say that they are the result of a kind of wrongheadedness, of an error in method. Setting them aside, we find in our hands a generous bulk of music that gives us the sense of “bigness,” and gains a height not to be reached save by the strong of wind and limb. Consider the opening of “Don Juan,” consider the conflict and apotheosis of “Tod und Verklärung,” the epilogue of “Heldenleben,” the opening, the “Joys and Passions” section, and “Night Song” of “Also sprach Zarathustra,” the trio at the end of “Der Rosenkavalier.” There can be no hesitation about these examples. Or, to come still closer to the subject, consider the great climax at the commencement of “Also sprach Zarathustra,” in which the organ joins the orchestra. The man who wrote that was no small, feeble tinkler. It must be insisted, however, that we are looking at the Strauss compositions in the light of what we conceive to be the Grand Style. Innumerable points to be made obtrude themselves at the bare mention of the titles. We have to keep clear of any discussion as to Strauss's virtues and failings that is irrelevant. On these virtues and failings the reader will have his own opinion. Whatever that opinion happens to be, it cannot alter the fact that Strauss possesses the Grand Style. In an age which hears much tintinnabulation, and at a time when the market is well stocked with musical narcotics, this should need no telling. Strauss has swept the deep sea. The full-breasted wave, throwing its spindrift toward the sky, rises in his surging score. Not here do we need to cry for fresh air, far less for the oxygen cylinder.

In Elgar, also, the Grand Style is present; that is to say, in the Elgar of the two symphonies, and the symphonic study, “Falstaff.”

There are those who remain antipathetic to Elgar's music. From them will come opposition to the proposal to set him in the present company, because they see only the external bigness, the length of the works in point of time, but not in point of interest, the richness of the scoring, and, perhaps, the prodigious technique. Where disagreement raises its head is where the emotional value of the music, and its suitability, come to be considered. I can only say that if words have any meaning at all, Elgar cannot be turned at the door. If the Grand Style consists of depth, and weight, and height, in the power to soar with wings that are strong, in a great and impressive significance, in other and sundry qualities of a kindred nature, Elgar cannot be rejected. You may, or may not, like the aura which is designated by the word *Elgarian*. Like Strauss, Elgar has his own way of doing things. There are harmonies and skips in his melody that are characteristic of him, and of him alone. Once more, we come down to the rock bottom. Can you say that the first symphony is in other than the Grand Style, fully exemplified from the first bar to the last? Can you withhold the title of exponent of the Grand Style to the man who penned the opening *allegro* and the finale of the second symphony? Finally, can you name the style of "Falstaff" as anything at all save grand—"Falstaff," in which a Shakespearean subject is treated with a proper feeling for its humanity, in music worthy of it, and with what seems uncanny ease? If these three works be not in the Grand Style, I confess that that epithet means nothing to me, and I believe that definition is a lying jade whom we should boldly order to quit.

I do not think that the Russians have the Grand Style. A great deal of the attention paid to Russian music, and of the excitement which it kindled but a few years ago, was owing to its local tinge; we discerned something idiosyncratic of a far-off place, or an interesting people. In the first instance, it came to the Western mind like a breeze from the sea, fresh and invigorating. If something of the fascination has evaporated, and the sense of novelty been lost, the reason is not far to seek. So assiduously and indiscriminately was Russian music thrust upon us—musical geese often being classified as musical swans—that a natural reaction set in. We are paying for a surfeit; many a piece, interesting, suggestive, and charming in itself, is for the present, at least, placed at a very considerable disadvantage. To express it otherwise, the revulsion now felt by some people is an unfortunate legacy of the previous "boom." Here is music unlike that of the Germans, great or small. Place Brahms beside it, and the most

casual and indifferent student must be aware of the difference in mentality and method. Is that which made Russian music so attractive and stimulating at an early stage in our acquaintance with it, a thing that exhausts itself, and does not deeply affect us when we are thoroughly familiar with the compositions? Is Russian music a music that relies for its appeal on the accessories and superfluities? Whether this be so or not, no Russian I am acquainted with has the Grand Style. In saying this I recognise, of course, that there may exist in some inaccessible place a score which possesses it in the fullest measure; that, if it exist, it may be from the pen of some unknown person. Russia is a large country, in which music is widely cultivated. It is, consequently, impossible even for the most lynx-eyed and beaver-like critic to know every bar of Russian music at a given moment. But turn to Rubinstein, for a start. I rule out Rubinstein at once. To him it is impossible to allot a high place as a composer. Was he more than a man who had the scribbling itch? Tchaikovsky and Glazounov are, no doubt in their own ways, symphonists, though the way of Tchaikovsky is as peculiar as the ways of Ah Sin were dark, and the way of Glazounov that of a musical journeyman. Tchaikovsky's music forms a tempting bait; so much can be said for it, and against it. To be allowed the Grand Style, he is too fussy; and we meet too much padding, even in his best work. In him we find also an unusual proportion of a strange kind of confidential utterance—Tchaikovsky wore his heart upon his sleeve—but it is confidence of the wrong kind. The "Pathétique," for instance, is not the tragic muse garbed sombrely, whose grief lies deeply hidden in the soul. It is the fretful, peevish, simpering little figure of *fin de siècle*, shedding tears all over the world. Familiarity with Tchaikovsky's music tends to abolish any sense of "bigness" that the neophyte may experience; a fourth, fifth, or tenth hearing of the symphonies will bring with it a clearness in this respect, and show the intelligent hearer that the "bigness" for which we call is not in them to be discovered. In fact, what really for a time allures us here is patent, not latent. Tchaikovsky, the musician, has no instep. No sooner have you half persuaded yourself that he is just about to accomplish a great feat, or exhibit a superiority of mind or feeling, than some trivial or vulgar passage assaults your ear. The next page may hold a surprise, or, as you come to know by experience, a disappointment. Glazounov's is a case very different. The plan and the "laying out" of Glazounov's symphonies are sadly at variance with their content. He is empty of vital matter. With every possible technical contrivance in his

box of tricks, has he created a symphony which is not hollow? Language was given to man to conceal his thought, maybe; Glazounov chose music to conceal his lack of it. He is like a geometrical point, having position, but no magnitude. I do not think I am wrong if I say that the other prominent Russian composers do not offer us examples of the Grand Style. Even Rachmaninoff's fine second symphony, with its constant interest and profusion of beauty, with its eloquence equal to that of Tchaikovsky, and its earnestness that is in a measure allied to that of Brahms, fails, somehow, to give me that definite and final sense of the Grand Style. Russian music still draws very generously upon the folk-song, and the folk-song idioms. Even when the composer has approached the West and breathed its intellectual air, he is frequently like the Chinaman who wears his native garb, but lends it piquancy by adding one or two European garments; all of which augments critical interest, if it also supplies us with a text for a sermon on style. Should one, then, say that a more or less strict adherence to the folk-song manner is, in the present instance, incompatible with the attainment of the Grand Style?

And what of the French? I have more than once pointed out that the attraction of French music at any particular period is distributed among a number of musicians, not one of whom can be called, in any historical sense, a master. For all her glory and her wealth in temperament, idea, and phrase, France has not given to the world a Dante or a Shakespeare, nor has she given to it a Bach, a Beethoven, or a Wagner. Berlioz forms the greatest height touched by French music, rough and volcanic as the mountain itself is. But the Berlioz of the "*Symphonie fantastique*" and of "*Romeo and Juliet*," with his burning imaginative power, seems to me too fragmentary, explosive, and erratic to be set with those on whom the mantle has fallen. Though in a certain and unique way Berlioz has "bigness," it is hardly "bigness" in the sense that justifies his admittance to the favoured coterie. Sublime is not the first word we should use when talking of his music. In speaking thus, I feel that a great deal needs to be said about him which is not usually said; that his shortcomings, which are there for all eyes to see and ears to hear, are pretty generally enlarged upon, while his merits, which are often for the keen eye to see and the quick ear to discern, are but cursorily handled. What I say of him I base on an experience of those works which most commonly figure on orchestral programmes. Unfortunately, it is but rarely that the remainder of his music sounds in concert halls.

Apart from Berlioz, only Franck's one experiment in the symphonic domain need detain us. For, though born in Belgium, Franck may suitably be considered here, as he has come to be identified with an important phase of French music. Regret that he wrote only one symphony will always be mingled with joy that it is a symphony so noble and sincere. The composition, to the last drum tap, discloses the man. Every page has been felt as well as written. The music flows from a fountain pure and clear. In contrast to some symphonies, this specimen is symphonic, holding to a rich speech, and depending neither on tricks nor vain strivings. All that Franck set out to do, he has done thoroughly. At the end of it, a sense of completeness takes possession of us. With this sense of completeness goes one of amplitude. The initial *largo*, so pregnant of fateful things to follow, does not turn out a false prophet. In the succeeding *allegro* we are plunged into the Grand Style. Passion reigns when the first subject dominates the score. On arriving at the inspired, and inspiring, second subject, we have no hesitation in calling Franck, as here revealed, a big man. The music of the entire symphony is, in fact, large in every sense. In listening to it, we have, somehow, got to the very core of things, and penetrated regions the doors of which can never be opened by puny Lilliputians.

Leaving Berlioz and Franck, we pass, I believe, from the region of doubt. No earlier French musician clamours for mention; no later. The Gounod of "The Redemption" and "Mors et Vita" is small fry indeed. Saint-Saëns, Lalo, Bizet, Massenet, Delibes and Chabrier are far outwith our boundaries. Later composers, like Debussy, Ravel, and Dukas, do not come any nearer to it. The Grand Style is the oak; French music of to-day is the poppy. In contemplating it, we have to ask ourselves whether the static music, so widely exploited in France at present, with its perpendicular view and its harmonic (perhaps one ought to say chordal) interest, can ever achieve what we have in mind. Are a wider throw and a more vigorous momentum not imperatively necessary? Is the insistence upon the musical equivalent of "*le mot propre*," is the preoccupation with nuance and atmosphere, as the modern French interpret the terms, not an obstacle to the attainment of the Grand Style? The artistic world, no less than the physical, belongs to the energetic. Zola held that "*une œuvre d'art est un coin de la nature vu à travers un tempérament*." At the moment the French seem to lay stress upon the "corner." In the aggregate, their music does not leave the commentator high and dry, for it lends itself to criticism, and provides

a rich field for discourse. But one cannot repress a feeling that it has reached the end of the road. It needs the wind of heaven and the ground swell of the ocean. It needs rain from the clouds to give it a fresh complexion, and a healthy appetite. It has arrived at the perilous hour when a new turning must be taken if it is not to suffer the loss of vitality that results from lack of blood-mixture. Echoes of Debussy are as far removed from the authentic Grand Style as anything could be, which said, a word of warning has to be pronounced. This is not a denunciation. It is a description of the situation as I see it; a statement concerning French music, as it appears when we look at it from the point of view of the Grand Style. That the output of the last five-and-twenty years contains much of cleverness, resource and charm none will dispute; and it should not be incumbent to add that a man must obey his bias, and be loyal to that which reposes within, though this does not mean that he must keep his mind hermetically sealed against the ideas that the world gives birth to. The large and imposing work has its place, time, and function; the small its place, time, and function also. The lover of the epic need not be the enemy of the sonnet, or he who revels in Wagner and Strauss impervious to the sweet voice of Chopin, or the naïve accents of the clavecinists. We do not march to knowledge, or enrich ourselves by developing futile antagonisms. The world, life, and human feeling call for the presence of many things, because moods change, because the tropics are hot and the arctic regions cold, because the sons of men are of divers kinds, because monotony of diet brings trouble in its wake. It is not our task to set one art-work against its neighbour. We must use to the full all that is beautiful and ennobling. French music takes its place in the scheme of things; we may leave it at that.

We are still left with an appalling amount of untouched material. It may satisfy the reader if some brief notice be taken of two men who will be familiar to him. What are we to say of Handel, and of Brahms? A large proportion of Handel's music sounds very old-fashioned now-a-days, if not downright archaic. Dissociating it from the stuffy and pedantic type of individual who is so commonly immersed in it, I cannot, with justice, refuse to put Handel in the gallery. In such a chorus as the "Hallelujah," Handel, striking like a thunderbolt, exhibits the Grand Style. There is in the piece "bigness" of the right sort, a "bigness" that is not lost to us though the notes are as familiar as the alphabet, as expected as to-morrow's sunrise. About Brahms there can be no such unanimity, the verdicts concerning his music resembling

those concerning the music of Liszt, in that they are many and varied. Parrot-talk of "the three B's" is compromising. For those who indulge in it, Brahms presumably remains beyond all doubt one of the exemplars of the Grand Style. From others, who do not quite subscribe to the compressed gospel of "the three B's," we may, at any rate, look for more caution. I am not a Brahmsian, if the word represents one who places the Hamburg composer on the same platform as Beethoven. Making all the proper allowances, he strikes me as a musician of lower rank. This, doubtless, remains a matter of taste and "psychic disposition." More promising will it be to touch the nerve centre of the Brahms problem, as it emerges here. Brahms has two distinct aspects. At his best, he is, certainly, a man of considerable stature, a man who might show his countenance in any company, a man whose music does not in the smallest degree rely upon the trival, the fashionable, or the facile. In his Olympian moments, if he does not offer us the Grand Style as we have it in Bach or in Beethoven, he offers us something near to it. The song has a soaring quality; his music enfolds itself slowly, as though with a trust in its own inherent strength. He sounds the deep, satisfying note, that is the more satisfying the more you hear it. This first, this noble Brahms is the Brahms of the finale of the first symphony, of the second and fourth symphonies, of the masterly violin concerto, and of the slow movement of the quintet. There would be less trouble in "placing" him were it not for the Mr. Hyde that haunted this Dr. Jekyll. In his second aspect, he not only nodded rather more frequently than good manners permit—he positively snored. A considerable portion of the first and third symphonies appears to me to belong to his less happy moods. The entire double concerto, that pyramid of dulness, shows us Brahms at his very worst, a commonplace and mechanical music-spinner, who could write an elaborate work without once exhibiting so much as a momentary flicker of the divine fire. One can hardly believe that the composer of this masterpiece of aridity was the man who put on paper the fourth symphony. Perhaps, in these days of psychology, there remains some doubt as to this; if so, it may be a mitigating circumstance, though, unhappily, it cannot render the double concerto other than it is. If interest be the test of length, this score makes a draft upon eternity.

With the good qualities of Brahms, earnestness, sobriety, a distaste of the flashy, a contempt for the half-digested, went grave shortcomings, dulness, writing for writing's sake, or, at least, writing when the impulse was either non-existent, or not

vital enough to make its effect. I should not quarrel with the man who pleaded the cause of Brahms, were it based on the last movement of the first symphony, on the second symphony, and on the violin concerto. I should totally disagree with him if he called the third symphony, or the double concerto as evidence. If we are to allow Brahms to remain with those we have spoken of as possessing the Grand Style, we ought to make it quite clear that he may do so by virtue of such works as the former, and by virtue of them alone.

Not being a Chinese drama, this dissertation has to be drawn to a close. In finishing, I am very conscious that only the fringe of a vast subject has been touched. A thousand questions, like birds on the wing, fly before us. The name of this man, and that, and the other, leap to mind. Little points in style, theme, or manner clamour for elucidation—little, only seemingly, because nothing that deeply concerns art is little at all. In summing up, let us recognise that each man has his own constituency, to which he must be faithful. There are minor composers who, working in a small compass, vie with the Japanese artist in delicacy of touch. The miniaturist being a miniaturist, no good purpose can be served by calling him anything else. It is for us to see in him what he is. Thus, to acknowledge the Grand Style is not to frown on music that cannot boast it. It is merely to hail the great and noble song, when it falls upon our ears. And the time we spend with those who tower high above us, and touch the clouds colossus-like, can hardly fail to be a time rich in its revelations, and inspiring in its influences.